

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SAN JOSE 002809

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INL AND WHA/CEN
JUSTICE FOR OIA, AFMLS, NDDS
TREASURY FOR FINCEN
DEA FOR OILS AND OFFICE OF DIVERSION CONTROL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [CS](#)

SUBJECT: COSTA RICA INCSR REPORT 2005 - 2006 PART I, DRUGS
AND CHEMICAL CONTROL

REF: STATE 209560

11. (U) The text of Costa Rica's 2005-2006 INCSR Part I is below.

Costa Rica

1I. Summary

Costa Rica is becoming a major transshipment point for narcotics to the United States and Europe. Costa Rican officials demonstrate professionalism and reliability as partners in combating ever-changing drug smuggling methods. Costa Rican authorities seized a record 6,749 kilos of cocaine and 49.38 kilos of heroin in 2005.

Local consumption of illicit narcotics, particularly crack cocaine, along with the violent crimes associated with drug use, is a growing concern. The Government of Costa Rica (GOCR) continued to implement a 2002 narcotics control law that criminalized money laundering. Joint implementation of the 1998 bilateral Maritime Counterdrug Cooperation Agreement continues to improve the overall maritime security of Costa Rica. The Counternarcotics Institute, created in 2003, enhanced its coordination efforts in the areas of intelligence, demand reduction, asset seizure, and precursor chemical licensing. Costa Rica is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

Costa Rica's location astride the Central American isthmus, its territorial seas (which are 10 times larger than its total land mass and cover primary maritime smuggling routes) and its distance from Colombia make it an ideal transshipment area for South American cocaine and heroin destined primarily for the United States. Costa Rican waters are highly vulnerable to the transshipment of illegal drugs in small go-fast boats refueled by larger boats posing as fishing vessels.

Costa Rica has a stringent governmental licensing process for the importation and distribution of controlled precursor chemicals. The GOCR cooperates against with the USG in combating narcotics trafficking, but budgetary limitations constrain the capabilities of its law enforcement agencies.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2005

Policy Initiatives.

The 1998 bilateral Maritime Counterdrug Cooperation Agreement and the Coast Guard Professionalization Law passed in 2000 provide impetus for the professional development of the Costa Rican Coast Guard and improving maritime security. The Costa Rican Coast Guard Academy, established in 2002, has thus far graduated 150 Officials (28 in 2005). Costa Rica is the depository for the multilateral "Agreement Concerning Cooperation in Suppressing Illicit Maritime and Aeronautical Trafficking in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in the Caribbean Area" signed in 2003 in San Jose. The Costa Rican Counternarcotics Institute develops an annual counternarcotics plan; however, resource limitations frustrate full implementation of the plan.

Accomplishments.

Close relations between U.S. law enforcement agencies and GOCR counterparts led to regular information-sharing and joint operations. As a result, Costa Rican authorities seized a record amount of illicit narcotics in 2005 (see below) and maintained compliance with its obligations under the 1988 UN drug convention. On regional cooperation, the Mobile Enforcement Team (MET)-an interagency team consisting of canine units, drug control police, customs police and specialized vehicles inaugurated in 2004-coordinated 8 cross-border operations with authorities in Nicaragua and Panama in 2005. The MET carried out most of these operations without U.S. prompting.

Law Enforcement Efforts.

The primary counternarcotics agencies in Costa Rica are the Judicial Investigative Police (OIJ) in the judicial branch, and the Ministry of Public Security's Drug Control Police (PCD) of the executive branch. Other authorities include the Costa Rican Coast Guard, the Air Surveillance Section, and the 10,000-member police force.

The OIJ operates a small, but highly professional, Narcotics Section that specializes in investigating international narcotics trafficking. The PCD investigates both domestic and international drug smuggling, and coordinates most interdiction operations. Both entities routinely conduct complex investigations of drug trafficking organizations, resulting in arrests and the confiscation of cocaine and other drugs.

As mentioned above, Costa Rican authorities seized a record 6,749 kilos of cocaine in 2005 while increasing seizures of crack by 30 percent and nearly doubling the eradication of marijuana to over one million plants. Costa Rican drug police seized 881 kilos of processed marijuana and 49.38 kilos of heroin in 2005. In addition, Costa Rican authorities confiscated almost \$800,000 in currency, 51 vehicles and 41 firearms in 2005. Drug-related arrests increased dramatically to 6,251 from 1,024 in 2004.

Corruption.

Costa Rica signed the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption in March 1996 and ratified it in May 1997. Unprecedented corruption scandals, involving apparent kickbacks to officials at the highest levels of the two previous administrations, were exposed in 2004 and tested Costa Rica's legal system throughout 2005. Although the cases have not yet gone to trial, Costa Rica's commitment to combat public corruption appears to have been strengthened by these challenges.

The GOCR aggressively investigates allegations of official corruption or abuse. During 2005, at least six public security officers and 4 OIJ investigators were arrested on suspicion of involvement with narcotics traffickers. In addition, a judge and a prosecutor were fired along with 23 other judicial branch employees for non-drug related offenses. U.S. law enforcement agencies consider the public security forces and judicial officials to be full partners in counternarcotics investigations and operations.

To the best of these U.S. agencies' knowledge, no senior official of the GOCR engages in, encourages, or facilitates the illicit production or distribution of such drugs, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions.

Agreements and Treaties.

The 1998 Maritime Counterdrug Cooperation Agreement continues to serve as the model maritime agreement for Central America and the Caribbean.

The United States-Costa Rican extradition treaty, in force since 1991, has been actively used. Costa Rica ratified the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption and signed the UN Convention Against Corruption. Costa Rica ratified a bilateral stolen vehicles treaty in 2002. Costa Rica is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by its 1972 Protocol, and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

Costa Rica and the United States are also parties to bilateral drug information and intelligence sharing agreements dating from 1975 and 1976. Costa Rica is a member of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and the Egmont Group. It is a member of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS/CICAD). Costa Rica signed the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants, and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms.

Cultivation/Production.

Marijuana cultivation is extensive but low quality and confined to remote areas. Costa Rican authorities conducted eradication operations independent of USG assistance in 2005. Costa Rica does not produce other illicit drug crops or synthetic drugs.

Drug Flow/Transit.

The year 2005 witnessed a continuation of the trend toward frequent, smaller (50-500 kilos) shipments transiting Costa Rica in truck compartments and passenger car compartments. Seizures of such shipments increased in southern Costa Rica.

The trend toward increased trafficking of narcotics by

maritime routes has also continued with 11 incidents and a total of 3,620 kilos of cocaine seized at sea in 2005. Traffickers used Costa Rican-flagged fishing boats to smuggle drugs and to provide fuel for other go-fast boats. Domestic Programs (Demand Reduction). Costa Ricans have become increasingly concerned over local consumption, especially of crack cocaine.

The Prevention Unit of the Costa Rican Counternarcotics Institute oversees drug prevention efforts and educational programs throughout the country. In 2005, the Institute continued demand-reduction campaigns with posters in schools, universities, and pharmacies.

The Institute and the Ministry of Education distribute demand-reduction materials to all school children. The MET team often visits local schools in the wake of a deployment. The team's canines and specialized vehicles make effective emissaries for demand-reduction messages.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

U.S. Policy Initiatives.

Specific initiatives include: continuing to implement the bilateral Maritime Counterdrug Cooperation Agreement; enhancing the ability of the Air Section of the Public Security Ministry to respond to illicit drug activities by providing equipment and technical training; improving law enforcement capacity by providing training and equipment to the OIJ Narcotics Section, the PCD, the Intelligence Unit of the Costa Rica Counternarcotics Institute, the National Police Academy, and the Customs Control Police; and increasing public awareness by providing assistance to Costa Rican demand-reduction programs.

Bilateral Cooperation.

Under the terms of the bilateral Maritime Agreement, the U.S. has invested \$2.3 million to enhance mutual maritime security through the development of a professional Costa Rican Coast Guard.

In 2005, the U.S. provided training, computer equipment, software and other equipment to the Ministry of Public Security, the Judicial Branch, the Costa Rican Counternarcotics Institute's Financial Intelligence Unit, and the inter-agency MET unit. Total U.S. investment in Costa Rican law enforcement agencies was \$414,000.00 for 2005, and resulted in the seizure of over 6.7 metric tons of cocaine.

The Road Ahead.

The U.S. will continue to provide technical expertise, training, and funding to professionalize Costa Rica's Coast Guard and enhance its capabilities to conduct maritime law enforcement operations in support of the bilateral Maritime Counterdrug Cooperation Agreement.

The U.S. seeks to build upon the on-going successful maritime experience by turning more attention and resources to land interdiction strategies, including expanded coverage of airports, seaports and border checkpoints. The U.S. will continue to cooperate closely with the GOCCR in its efforts to professionalize its public security forces and implement and expand controls against money laundering.

LANGDALE